

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 SSM-03 /074 W
-----078188 052126Z /72

O R 051929Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 0366
AMEMBASSY CAIRO NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: IS, EG, PGOV, US
SUBJ: THE AFTERMATH OF ASWAN: ISRAELI COMMENTARY

SUMMARY: REACTION TO THE ASWAN TALKS IS AT THIS POINT
EXCEPTIONALLY CONFUSED AND UNCRYSTALLIZED. BROAD AGREE-
MENT ON THREE POINTS, HOWEVER, IS EMERGING: 1) THERE IS
RELIEF THAT ISRAEL'S POSITION HAS NOT BEEN DAMAGED BY
CARTER'S STATEMENT; 2) THE U.S. ROLE HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED
FROM PASSIVE TO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE NEGOTIATIONS;
AND 3) A WONDERFULLY AMBIGUOUS "MAGIC FORMULA" HAS BEEN
DEvised, ONE WHICH MINIMALLY SATISFIES ALL SIDES AND
CLEARS THE WAY FOR SUBSTANTIVE BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS.
ADDITIONALLY, THERE ARE (SOMETIMES CONFLICTING) ANALYSES
OF SADAT'S CLAIMED "IDENTITY OF VIEWS," THE EFFECT
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OF ASWAN ON SADAT'S POSITION, THE SELF-DETERMINATION
QUESTION AND THE USE OF THE PHRASE "LEGITIMATE RIGHTS
OF THE PALESTINIANS." FINALLY, THE EXPECTATION OF AN
ACTIVE AMERICAN ROLE, EXPRESSED IN THE REPORTING OF
THE ASWAN MEETING, WAS REINFORCED BY DAYAN'S REMARKS
TO TECHNION STUDENTS. END SUMMARY

1. THE AWAN MEETING FOLLOWED A PERIOD OF CONSIDERABLE ANTICIPATORY APPREHENSION. CONCERN WAS WIDELY EXPRESSED THAT CARTER MIGHT FEEL IMPELLED TO GO TOO FAR IN ASSURAGING SADAT'S RESENTMENT AND EMBARRASSMENT FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT REJECTING A PALESTINIAN STATE AND THE SUBSEQUENT MEDIA-INSPIRED MISUNDERSTANDINGS. RELIEF THAT ISRAEL'S POSITION HAS NOT BEEN UNDERMINED IS EVIDENT IN MOST REPORTING, EDITORIAL COMMENT, AND PRIVATE REACTION. ('WE CAN LIVE WITH' CARTER'S ASWAN STATEMENT," THE JERUSALEM POST HEADLINES.) THE ONLY CLEAR-CUT RESULT OF THE TALKS IN THE OPINIONS OF MOST OBSERVERS IS THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AMERICAN ROLE FROM THAT OF PASSIVE OBSERVER TO ACTIVE PARTICIPANT (LEAPFROGGING THE ROLE OF MEDIATOR). DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THIS DEVELOPMENT HAS NOT SURFACED. (COMMENT: IN THIS CONTEXT IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE PRESS TREATMENT OF DAYAN'S REMARKS IN HAIFA LAST NIGHT. PRIMARY ATTENTION IS PAID TO HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVE ROLE THE U.S. IS EXPECTED TO PLAY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS--THE SAME THEME THAT PERVADES REPORTING ON THE ASWAN TALKS. SOME PROMINENCE WAS ALSO GIVEN TO HIS HARDENING LINE ON THE RAFAH SETTLERS, AND THE NECESSITY FOR LOCAL PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE JERUSALEM TALKS.) THE SINGLE CONSENSUAL REACTION IS THAT THE CARTER STATEMENT REPRESENTS A "MAGIC FORMULA" (IDENTICAL PHRASING OF MA'ARIV AND YEDIOT) WHICH LEAVES EVERYONE TEMPORARILY SATISFIED.

2. ANALYSES OF THE OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASWAN TALKS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE JERUSALEM NEGOTIATIONS, ARE TENTATIVE AND CONTRADICTORY. ATTENTION FOCUSES ON THE CLAIM BY SADAT OF AN IDENTITY OF AMERICAN AND EGYPTIAN VIEWS, AND IN THIS CONNECTION ON KEY PHRASES IN THE CARTER STATEMENT ("LEGITIMATE RIGHTS," AND THE PALESTINIANS' RIGHTS TO "PARTICIPATE IN THE DETERMINATION OF THEIR OWN FUTURE") AND ON THE OMISSION OF REFERENCES TO THE PLO AND A PALESTINIAN STATE. SOME COMMENTATORS CONTEND THAT AN IDENTITY OF VIEWS WAS NOT ACHIEVED; IF IT HAD BEEN, A JOINT COMMUNIQUE WOULD HAVE BEEN ISSUED. ISRAEL SHOULD TAKE COMFORT IN THIS, FOR EVEN IF SADAT HAS NOT BUDGED FROM HIS POSITION ON THE CRITICAL ISSUES, CARTER HAS NOT CAVED IN, AS SOME HAD FEARED. THE U.S., IN THIS ANALYSIS, STILL FAVORS A NON-INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN ENTITY LINKED WITH JORDAN, WHILE SADAT IS FIRM IN HIS DEMAND FOR A PALESTINIAN

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STATE (ALSO WITH A LINKAGE TO JORDAN). ALSO, CARTER'S
REFERENCE TO THE ENGLISH FORMULATION OF 242 IS NOT CONSISTENT
WITH SADAT'S STAND ON TOTAL WITHDRAWAL. FINALLY, CARTER HAS
NOT EMBRACED THE EGYPTIAN POSITION ON UNQUALIFIED "SELF-DET-
ERMINATION" FOR THE PALESTINIANS. PARADOXICALLY--AND AS AN
INDEX OF THE CONFUSION RAMPANT IN THE WAKE OF ASWAN--THERE
IS A SCHOOL OF OPINION (MOST COGENTLY EXPRESSED IN TODAY'S
HAARETZ EDITORIAL) WHICH HOLDS THAT AN IDENTITY OF POSITIONS
BETWEEN SADAT AND CARTER MAY IN FACT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED. FUR-
THERMORE, THIS IS TO BE WELCOMED AS IT IMPLIES EGYPTIAN ACCEP-
TANCE OF THE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE POINTS SPELLED OUT IN
CARTER'S STATEMENT (INCLUDING THOSE MENTIONED ABOVE). EGYPT,
IN THIS HOPEFUL INTERPRETATION, HAS MOVED TO THE MIDDLE GROUND.

3. IN ADDITION TO THESE FEW POINTS OF AGREEMENT, AND THE
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CONFLICTING ANALYSIS ON THE IDENTITY OF U.S.-
EGYPTIAN POSITIONS, A NUMBER OF DISCONNECTED QUESTIONS ARE
BEING ASKED, A FEW TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS REACHED. SOME OB-
SERVERS CONTEND THAT WHILE THE AMERICAN PURPOSE MAY HAVE BEEN
TO SOLIDIFY SADAT'S INTRA-ARAB POSITION, THE ASWAN MEETING MAY
IN FACT HAVE STRENGTHENED HIS HAND VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL. THERE IS
SOME SPECULATION THAT A NEW AMERICAN FORMULA FOR SIDESTEPPING

THE AUTONOMY VS. SELF-DETERMINATION IMPASSE WILL BE PROPOSED, ONE THAT WILL INVOLVE RECOGNITION BY ISRAEL OF THE NECESSITY FOR WITHDRAWAL IN RETURN FOR SOMETHING LESS THAN AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. IN THIS CONNECTION, MAARIV STATES THAT IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT NO DIRECT PARTY TO THE NEGOTIATION (AND JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA AS WELL) FAVORS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN STATE. IT FOLLOWS THAT A VIABLE SOLUTION MAY INVOLVE PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION (ALONG WITH JORDAN AND ISRAEL) IN DETERMINING THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, WITH THE INDEPENDENCE OPTION RULED OUT IN ADVANCE. A DETERMINATION ON THE PART OF ALL SIDES TO DRAW JORDAN INTO THE NEGOTIATION OF A SETTLEMENT ALONG THESE LINES IS NOTED BY MANY. CARTER'S USE OF THE PHRASE "LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS" OFFENSIVE TO MANY ISRAELIS, STRENGTHENS SADAT'S HAND (HAARETZ), BUT GUINEY IN YEDYOT DISAGREES, ARGUING ITS USE IS NOT AS DANGEROUS AS IT WAS THREE MONTHS AGO. FINALLY, THE QUESTION OF A POSSIBLE BILATERAL AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT HAS BEEN RESUSCITATED. DAVAR SPECULATES THAT IN THE FACE OF A DEADLOCK OVER THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, ISRAEL WOULD ATTEMPT TO INDUCE EGYPT INTO ACCEPTING A NON-BELLIGERENCY AGREEMENT.

4. COMMENT: ASWAN HAS COME AND GONE AND THE RELIEF IS PALPABLE; THE ISRAELI POSITION HAS NOT BEEN SERIOUSLY UNDERMINED BY ANY CHANGE IN THE AMERICAN POSTURE. ACTIVE AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN THE JERUSALEM TALKS IS REGARDED AS INEVITABLE--NOTA PARTICULARLY ATTRACTIVE PROSPECT, BUT NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TERRIBLY ALARMING EITHER. MOST IMPORTANT, LESS THAN A WEEK AFTER THE KNESSET DEBATE, THERE ARE SIGNS--IN THE FORM OF CRYPTIC AND PARENTHETICAL REMARKS IN COMMENTARY AND REPORTING--OF THE FIRST GLIMMERINGS OF AN AWARENESS OF THE NEED TO GO BEYOND BEGIN'S AUTONOMY PLAN.
LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHIEFS OF STATE MEETINGS, PEACE PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV00183
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780009-0177
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780194/aaaadbqh.tel
Line Count: 208
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 55a101e6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3821390
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE AFTERMATH OF ASWAN: ISRAELI COMMENTARY SUMMARY: REACTION TO THE ASWAN TALKS IS AT THIS POINT
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TAGS: PGOV, MPOL, IS, EG, US, (CARTER, JIMMY), (SADAT, ANWAR)
To: STATE CAIRO
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/55a101e6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014